

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Thursday, March 3, 2016, for the purpose of meeting with the Greenbelt East Advisory Coalition (GEAC).

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 7:30 p.m. The meeting was held in the Hunting Ridge Community Room.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V.J. Putens and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan. Councilmember Rodney M. Roberts was detained at work and arrived at 7:47 p.m. Councilmember Silke I. Pope was detained at a Belle Point Homeowners Association Meeting and arrived at 9:08 p.m. Councilmember Judith F. Davis was out of the country.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: David Moran, Assistant City Manager, and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

*ALSO PRESENT WERE: Terry Benedik of Greenbriar; Rohanie Bacchus of Greenspring II; Austin Henry of Greenspring I; Charlene MacAdams of Greenwood Village; Tom Crandall of Greenbelt Lake Village; Marcia Cain of Hunting Ridge; Dereck and Judith Thompson of Windsor Green; Laura Kressler and University of Maryland students. *Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens indicated he was representing Greenbrook Estates.*

Ms. Bacchus began with introductions. Council then reviewed the list of questions provided by GEAC.

GEAC: What is the City's policy regarding snow removal, emergency plans and routes, and penalties for businesses, individual homeowners, and homeowner associations who do not remove snow in a timely manner?

City Response: The City does not have snow emergency routes. Residents are asked to park in a driveway or on a particular side of the road if we are expecting a lot of snow.

The City works to keep all City streets passable during a storm. Following a storm, the goal is to remove snow curb to curb. Snow removal on State roads like the Beltway, Greenbelt Road and Kenilworth Avenue is performed by the State Highway Administration. The B-W Parkway is the responsibility of the National Park Service.

Businesses, homeowners and associations are expected to remove snow from their sidewalks, parking lots and private roads. There is a County regulation that requires removal within 48 hours. The City prefers to seek the cooperation of property owners throughout the community.

Residents are encouraged to help clear snow from hydrants and the media reiterated this throughout the storm. Working to clear the streets curb to curb opens up storm drains as well.

GEAC: What can the City do to help homeowner associations petition FEMA for funding to deal with extreme emergency situations like the recent big snow emergency? (GEAC noted municipalities can apply for such funding, why not homeowner communities?)

City Response: FEMA regulations are established by the Federal Government. Homeowner Associations should advocate for changes in these FEMA rules. The City has advocated for such changes in the past and will continue to support such efforts.

GEAC: What might the City do about code enforcement of homeowners who want to convert wood-burning fireplaces to geo-thermal heating? How would it coordinate with county regulations?

City Response: Conversion to Geo-thermal heating is regulated by the County.

GEAC: Do the City code enforcement regulations allow wood-burning fireplaces to be converted to propane fuel?

City Response: Installation of wood burning stoves or conversion of wood burning to propane fueled fireplace stoves would be regulated by Prince George's County.

After discussion on this question, Mayor Jordan suggested the representatives consider addressing this concern with County Council Member Turner at his Listening Session scheduled for March 10th in Greenbelt.

Mr. Putens requested City regulations regarding conversions to geo-thermal and propane be considered on the agenda of the next Council meeting.

GEAC: GEAC has been asking the Police Department for several years for crime statistics that don't lump summary statistics for Greenbelt East residential communities with those of commercial properties, e.g. Greenway Center or Schrom Hills Park. Can Council help the police get such summary information for GEAC?

City Response: The Police Department has increased its Crime Data Collection and mapping capabilities significantly over the past year and one half. Through partnering with crimereports.com, any resident can check the history of crime occurrences for their individual street, neighborhood or portion of the City for the previous 6 months. The Police Department has also identified 55 separate individual neighborhoods or data collection areas within the City for additional in depth crime analysis. Any HOA or Stakeholder Representative may contact the Police Department Crime Prevention Office for assistance in obtaining this crime data to aid in providing this information to those without access to a computer, smartphone or other internet access device.

Mayor Jordan reviewed the Police Department's Monthly Statistical Report.

GEAC: To improve security in Greenbelt, does the Council have any plans to put more security cameras and lighting in various locations in the City, especially in Schrom Hills Park?

City Response: There are no current plans. Parking lot lighting at Schrom Hills was upgraded in 2012 using Federal grant funds. Are there specific lighting/camera locations at Schrom Hills Park being suggested?

Ms. Bacchus reported there are periodic problems with dirt bikers in Schrom Hills Park and thought that cameras may be beneficial in apprehending these individuals.

GEAC: What does Council see as current trends in crime in Greenbelt, particularly in Greenbelt East? Are there particular problem areas and types of crime that are big issues now?

City Response: The most significant crime trend occurring by far in Greenbelt at this time is fraud and cybercrime. Over the past few months, this fraud has included multiple instances of attempted theft by way of fraudulent tax collection schemes. General identity theft through internet/cyber fraud continues to victimize Greenbelt citizens at an increasing rate. Crime Prevention Specialist George Mathews has sent out a number of public awareness notices through various media platforms informing the public of this situation. George also addresses this crime problem at every community event which he attends.

Specific to Greenbelt East, over the past two years trends indicate instances of robbery increased by 8 from 15 to 23. There were also 18 more burglaries in 2015 than 2014, rising from 33 to 51. During the same time period, vehicle thefts dropped from 31 to 14. Regarding Greenbelt East burglaries, recently two suspects have been identified through DNA collected at two separate crime scenes. Upon the arrest of these individuals, it is believed the rate of burglary incidents in Greenbelt East will decrease significantly.

GEAC: With regard to the City Budget, how might this year's decrease in property values and increase in tax assessments affect the 2016 budget allocations to services and facilities? How might changes to the development of the Greenbelt Station project affect the budget?

City Response: Revenues and expenditures for FY 2016 are on target. Preliminary estimates for FY 2017 show increases in owner occupied residential property, but decreases in apartments, commercial office and retail. At present the City anticipates only a slight revenue increase. As Greenbelt Station continues to develop, there will be revenue increases for the City.

GEAC: How does the City monitor the upkeep and cleanup of the City dog park?

City Response: The City monitors the dog park weekly. Trash is collected weekly and maintenance is performed as needed. The City will be installing a test patch of artificial canine turf at the dog park this spring.

GEAC: When might it alleviate the burden on the existing dog park, by adding another? Where might a new park be located?

City Response: The FY 2016 Capital Projects Budget includes funds to begin planning for a second dog park. Locations are being studied.

GEAC: Given recent problems for voters at the election location at the Turning Point Academy (e.g. incorrect voter lists, cramped conditions, small numbers of voting booths, etc.), can the Council please see about changing the location to somewhere else in Greenbelt East, e.g. Schrom Hills Park or a homeowner association's community center?

City Response: Voting lists are maintained by the Prince George's County Board of Elections. Any concerns about their accuracy should be directed to the County.

The City's Board of Elections is responsible for selection of polling places. Concerns about conditions, etc. have been shared with the Board so they can reevaluate for the 2017 Election.

GEAC: Are there any updates on the status of the FBI possibly being located in Greenbelt?

City Response: Greenbelt is one of three potential locations. A draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was released in November. Bids from developers are due June 22.

GEAC: Might there be more bus shelters anticipated in Greenbelt East? If so, where? Has anything happened regarding the homeless persons sleeping in some shelters like the one near the Hunting Ridge traffic circle (e.g. better lighting and surveillance?)

City Response: The next bus stop to be installed is at the corner of Hanover Parkway and Hanover Drive (partly funded by developer contribution). New bus shelter locations for FY 2017 have not been identified to date. Staff will be looking at ridership levels and site conditions/safety and making location recommendations to the City Manager. The bus shelter near Hunting Ridge was modified so that a person cannot laydown on the bench. The City Manager also requested that Public Works change the tinted windows to clear, and requested Police to monitor the shelter. Currently there are no plans for increased lighting.

GEAC: There appear to have been many abuses by owners in Greenbelt East homeowner communities who rent to people they report as family members who are not really family. Has the City considered adopting a policy similar to that of Berwyn Heights to tighten up the wording defining what "family" is with regard to who should or should not be allowed to occupy such units?

City Response: Planning & Community Development staff are in the process of reviewing the City's Building Regulations and Rental Licensing laws (City Code – Chapter 4). They will review the Berwyn Heights language and consider it as part of this review.

GEAC: Given a recent Council work session on possible changes to playground surfaces throughout the City, what can Council say about any such plans with regard to playgrounds in Greenbelt East that are partially maintained through an agreement with several Greenbelt East communities?

City Response: The City is no longer using shredded rubber mulch as a playground surface and plans to replace shredded rubber in City maintained playgrounds as resources allow. Greenwood Village and Windsor Green were contacted by letter on 3/26/15 and a follow-up email was sent on 7/14/15 regarding this issue. The City is awaiting a response to these communications.

Ms. MacAdams and Mr. Thompson said Greenwood Village and Windsor Green will respond to the City's letter within a few months.

GEAC: Is there any update on the pros and cons of the different types of playground surfacing under study?

City Response: The pros and cons regarding playground surfacing options remain the same.

Installation of the new Fitness Area at Schrom Hills Park is expected to begin later this week, weather permitting. The project will take about two weeks.

GEAC: Are there any further updates on questions GEAC asked last year regarding:

a. county and city legislation;

Mr. Moran reviewed the City's 2016 Legislative Update.

b. the revitalization of Beltway Plaza and Greenbelt Road;

City Response: There has been no activity on revitalizing Beltway Plaza. Improving Greenbelt Road is one of the city's top legislative priorities for 2016. The project is waiting State funding.

c. the improvement of lighting along Greenbelt Road and a light at Springcrest Road;

City Response: Requests for improved lighting along Greenbelt Road have been relayed to the State Highway Administration. An additional street light at the cul-de-sac on Springcrest Drive will be installed.

d. the City's support of the Purple Line; and

City Response: The City continues to support the Purple Line.

e. any possible renewal of legislation (Bill MC/PG 111) granting additional planning and zoning authority to municipalities?

City Response: MC/PG 111 was a 2015 State bill which did not pass. Additional planning and zoning authority remains a City priority, but chances of such legislation passing is slim.

The meeting ended at 9:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*